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To International Indigenous People's Conference Participants

Free East Timor! Japan Coalition

East Timor

For almost four centuries East Timor was a colony of Portugal, and from 1942 to 1945 it was occupied by the Japanese army. In 1974, with the change in government in Portugal, East Timor was slated to gain independence as were all of the other Portugese colonies.

In the process of preparing for independence, Fretilin(Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor) gained wide support by the people. But on December 7, 1975 "volunteers" from the army,navy, and air force of neighboring Indonesia invaded East Timor on the pretext of supporting anti-independence Timorese. In 1976 Indonesia declared the integration of East Timor as part of Indonesia. However, thirteen years later, fighting still continues between the Indonesian army and Fretilin forces. Some 200,000 people, or almost one-third the population, are believed to have died from the war and resultant famine.

Today "Indonesianization" of East Timor is being vigorously promoted. Children are forced to speak Indonesian and sing the Indonesian anthem in school, and many transmigrants are being sent from Indonesia to settle there. Movement of Timorese confined to resettlement camps is severely restricted, making cultivation of crops difficult. Tenacious resistance by Fretilin forces continues. At the same time, reports reach the outside world of continual violations of human rights by the Indonesian forces--massacres, torture, arbitrary arrests, rape, and the like.

Although the United Nations has passed a number of resolutions upholding East Timor's right to self-determination, Japan has voted against these resolutions and has backed up the Suharto regime with enormous sums of money in the form of "economic aid."

East Timor and Us

The Free East Timor! Japan Coalition was formed in April, 1988 as a network of groups throughout the country concerned with the East Timor issue. We believe that the Japanese government and the Japanese people bear responsibility for what has happened in East Timor. Timor was the victim of Japanese imperialism in World War Ⅱ; through its economic and technical assistance to Indonesia after the war, Japan indirectly contributed to the invasion of East Timor; and since 1974 the Japanese government has been impeding the independence of East Timor. We consider the main task of the coalition to be support for the East Timorese people in their struggle for political, economic, and cultural independence.